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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the Owen Paterson case.

I firmly believe that MPs should uphold the highest standards in public life and that there must be tough and robust checks on Members of Parliament to ensure they adhere to these standards. It is important that there is an effective process to scrutinise Members' behaviour and, if necessary, to sanction those who fail to uphold the high standards expected of us.

This process must also, however, be fair to the MP concerned, enabling them to defend themselves, be legally represented where necessary, and it must offer a process of appeal. This is not currently the case for investigations into MPs that are outside the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS.) (The ICGS closely follows the laws of natural justice and mirrors the justice that is available to those in other walks of life and it has the support of the House and, I believe, the public.)

The amendment that I voted for sought a review of the investigatory process into non ICGS complaints (such as those into paid lobbying), and my hope in doing so was for a review to take place that would bring it into line with the robust processes we have for the ICGS.

It was a shame that the individual case relating to Owen Paterson was linked to the amendment, and I sincerely regret that this was interpreted by so many as an attempt to 'let him off'. Actually this would not have been the case - the amendment would not have changed any rules, or enabled his case to be scrapped.

However, with the benefit of hindsight, I fully accept the review should have been proposed to be completely and obviously separate from the Paterson case and not when it was under consideration. So, quite simply, I got it wrong. Indeed, I should have asked for this to have been made absolutely clear in the text of the amendment at the time and I apologise for making this mistake.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**